RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 10th May, 1993/the 20th Vaisakha, 1915 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the Clock, *Mr. Chairman* in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Monitoring the prices of essential commodities

*131. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : SHRI IQBAL SINGH :†

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) what are the names of essential commodities the prices of which are regularly monitored by Government;

(b) what are the details of the trends in the prices of these commodities as observed at the retail level during March and April, 1993; and

(c) in what manner these compare with the prices during January and February, 1993 ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED) . (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(a) At present, the prices of 12 essential commodities i.e. rice, wheat, gram, tur, sugar, groundnut oil, mustard oil, vanaspati, tea, salt, potato and onion are being regularly monitored by the Ministry of Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution.

(b) and (c) A comparative statement showing the retail prices of 12 essential commodities during March and April, 1993 and January and February, 1993 is given in the Annexure.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Iqbal Singh.

Annexure

Month-end retail prices of selected essential commodities at selected centres

(Rs. per kg.)

Commodity/Centres	January, 93	February, 93	March, 93	April, 93
1		3	4	
RICE				
Delhi	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Bombay	7.00	7.50	7.40	7.50
Calcutta	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20
Madras	6.80	6.80	7.00	6.80
WHEAT				
Delhi	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
Lucknow	4.00	3.80	3.50	3.45
Bombay	7.40	7.50	7.50	7.50
Madras	7.50	6.50	6.50	6.50
GRAM DAL				
Delhi	12.00	12.00	11.00	11.00
Bombay	15.00	13.00	13.00	13.00
Calcutta	11.00	12.00	11.50	12.00
Madras	13.50	12.00	11.50	11.50

1	2	3	4	5
TUR DAL				
Delhi	15.00	14.00	13.00	13.50
Bombay	17.00	15.00	16.00	16.00
Calcutta	17.00	16.00	15.00	15.00
Madras	18.00	17.00	17.00	17.00
SUGAR				
Delhi	10.00	11.00	10.50	11.00
Bombay	10.20	11.20	10.80	11.60
Calcutta	10 00	10 80	10.30	10.80
Madras	9.40	10.10	10.50	11.00
GROUNDNUT OIL				
Delhi	37.00	37.00	36.00	36.00
Bombay	34.00	32.00	32.00	32.00
Calcutta	45.00	42.00	42.00	42.00
Madras	30.00	29.00	26.00	25.00
MUSTARD OIL				
Delhi	29.00	28.00	26.00	28.00
Bombay	34.00	34.00	34.00	34.00
Calcutta	30.00	27.00	26.00	26.00
Madras	36.00	36.00	36.00	36.00
VANASPATI				
Delhi	34.00	33.00	32.00	35.00
Bombay	40.00	36.00	38.00	36.00
Calcutta	35.00	35.00	33.00	34.00
Madras	37.00	35.00	33 00	33.00
TEA (Loose)				
Delhi	55.00	55.00	60.00	60.00
Bombay	60.00	76.00	74.00	74.00
Bhubaneshwar	60.00	60.00	60.00	70.00
Calcutta	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00
SALT (Packed)				
Delhi	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.50
Bombay	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.50
Calcutta	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50
Madras	1.20(L)	1.20(L)	1.20(L)	1.20(L)
POTATOES				
Delhi	2.50	2.50	3.00	3.00
Bombay	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.50
Bhubaneshwar	2.00	2.00	4.50	3.00
Madras	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.50
ONIONS				
Delhi	4.00	5.50	5.00	4.00
Bombay	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00
Calcutta	4.00	5.00	5.50	4.00
Madras	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00

(L) : Loose

OURCE : State/UTs Civil Supplies Departments.

श्री इकबाल सिंह : सभापति जी, मंत्री जी ने जो कम्पेरेटिव लिस्ट आफ प्राइसेज दी है, इससे यह देखा गया है कि एक्साइज ड्यूटी और कस्टम ड्यटी इतनी कम होने के बावजूद भी आज जनता को, गरीब किसानों और मजदूरों को बढ़े हुए रेट्स पर चीजें मिल रही हैं। जैसे कि इन्होंने घी के बारे में बताया, दिल्ली में भी इसका रेट बढ़ा हुआ है और बम्बई में भी ऐसे है। टी. काफी और नमक यहां तक कि कपड़े और चीनी के रेट भी बढ़े हुए हैं। मेरी समझ में यह नहीं आ रहा है कि इतनी एक्साइज ड्यूटी और कस्टम ड्यूटी कम करने के बावजूद और इतना लिबरल बजट पेश करने के बावजूद भी आम वर्ग को यह चीजें कम रेट्स पर क्यों नहीं मिल रही हैं। देखने में यह आया है कि होल सेल प्राइस इंडैक्स में जनवरी से मार्च, 1993 में 8.8 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोत्तरी हुई है जबकि रिटेल प्राइस इंडेक्स में 5.4 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोत्तरी हुई है। इसका क्या कारण है? मेरा कहना यह है कि गरीब जनता को जिस कम रेट पर चीजें मिलनी चाहिएं उसके अनुसार रिटेल प्राइसेज कम होने चाहिए।

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A. K. ANTONY) : From the statement hon Members can see that, by and large, for the last one year the prices of almost all the commodities are remaining steady. In many cases they have declined and in some cases they have increased. After the reduction of excise duties, the prices of a large number of commodities, whole sale as well as retail, have come down. I agree with the hon. Member regarding sugar and tea. Regarding sugar, there is an increase in the price and in the case of tea also there is an increase. The main reason for the increase in sugar price is our decision to increase the sugar-cane price in all the States. Naturally that decision was taken to help the sugar-cane growers. When sugar-cane price was increased the other price rise also followed. That is why sugar price is a little higher. Regarding tea, even though tea was exempted from excise duty, manufacturers unilaterally increased the price. Their reason was that the auction price was very high and the production of tea this year is low as compared to last year. But the Government is seriously pursuing this matter. We are pursuing this and we are advising or requesting the tea producers to reduce the price. It is done not only in regard to tea but in regard to all the items on which excise duty concessions are given. The Government is monitoring this and we are seriously pursuing the matter. We have already requested the manufacturers and they will have to pass on a substantial portion of this reduction to the consumers.

श्री इकबाल सिंह : यह जो घी इंडस्ट्री है इसने पहले एनाउन्समेंट किया था कि अब रेट बहुत कम कर दिया जाएगा क्योंकि एक्साइज और कस्टम इसमें बहुत कम लिया गया है लेकिन देखने में यह आया कि उसके एक महीने के बाद फिर रेट बहुत ज्यादा बढ़ गये, खास करके कपड़े में और नमक पर जो कि आम दुकानों पर मिलता है इसका मंत्री जी ने कोई जवाब नहीं दिया। चाय की पत्ती के बारे में कहा कि कम प्रोडक्शन हुई है लेकिन जो रेट फिक्स किये गये हैं उससे भी ज्यादा रेट लिये जा रहे हैं और रिटेल प्राइस शाप्स में बहुत ज्यादा लिये जा रहे हैं। इसके लिए मंत्री जी क्या कह रहे हैं?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Sir, regarding the price of vanaspati, it is more or less steady. In fact, in several centres its price has declined. I agree with the hon. Member that there has been some increase in the price of salt. It is mainly because of the handling charges and the transport charges. The price of vanaspati has either declined or it is steady. However, there is not much increase in its price.

श्री इकबाल सिंह : वनस्पति घी के बारे। इन्होंने बिल्कुल नहीं बताया।

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Minister, regarding the price of vanaspati, have you got anything to add ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : I have already mentioned about the price of vanaspati.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I think this is the first occasion, the Minister has been given a chance to answer in this House. Am I right ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : I have already replied about vanaspati.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : सभापति जी, 1972-73 में प्लानिंग कमीशन में एक बहुत महत्वपूर्ण बैठक चीजों के, आवश्यक वस्तुओं के मूल्यों पर निगरानी रखने के लिए हुई थी। उसके बाद एक हाथी कमेटी हाथी जो के नेतृत्व में बनी थी । उसने एक सिफारिश की थी । उसके अनुसार जो आवश्यक वस्तुएं आज बाजार में हैं यह जरूरी था कि दुकानों के सामने उनके दामों की लिस्ट बनाई जाती और साथ-साथ जितने भी उपभोक्ता हैं आवश्यक वस्तुओं के चाहे साबुन हो, तेल हो या जो भी हो उन पर दाम भी प्रिंट किये जाते रहे थे हाथी कमेटी की रिपोर्ट के बाद । मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या सरकार ने निगरानी स्वरूप यह बात देखने की कोशिश की है कम से कम दिल्ली में कि यहां जितनी दुकानें हैं उनके सामने आवश्यक वस्तुओं की लिस्टें और उनके दाम तथा जो भी उपभोक्ता सामग्री है उन पर उत्पादकों के द्वारा उनके मूल्य प्रिंट हो रहे हैं या नहीं हो रहे हैं और इसका उल्लंघन करने के लिए पिछले छः महीने के अन्दर दिल्ली में क्या किसी पर कार्यवाही हुई है ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : The Central Government is monitoring the prices of most of the essential commodities on daily basis as well as on weekly basis. Regarding display of price list in the various shops, the implementation of this thing is vested with the State Governments. They have been delegated powers under the Essential Commodities Act and the Prevention of Black marketing Act to pursue this thing. We are, again and again, requesting the State Governments.

SHRI SHANKAR DAYAL SINGH : I am specifically asking about Delhi, not about other States.

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : So far as Delhi is concerned, the Central Government is not monitoring directly. The Delhi Administration is monitoring the prices in Delhi. We will not only request the Delhi Administration but all the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations to seriously pursue this matter. If anyone is not following our instructions, he will be prosecuted under the Essential Commodities Act. We will issue instructions to the State Governments.

चौधरी हरी सिंह : मान्यवर इस नये बजट में एक्साइज ड्यूटी और दूसरे टैक्सों में कमी करने और अन्य सहूलियतें देने के बावजूद मार्केट में जो आम कंज्यूमर के इस्तेमाल की चीजें हैं चाहे वह साबुन हो, घी, आटा, चीनी या चाय की पत्ती हो इन सबके दाम अगर देखते चले जाएं एक के बाद एक तो जितनी उम्मीद की जा रही थी दामों में गिरावट आने की वह गिरावट नहीं देखी गयी। सरकार की मंशा बिल्कुल साफ थी लेकिन यहां के ट्रेडर्स ने, दुकानदारों ने और जो व्यापारिक वर्ग है उसने इस बीच में किसी चीज के दाम नीचे नहीं किये । मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं स्पेशली कि क्या मंत्री जी ने इस बात के लिए कोई सर्वे कराया था अगर कराया था तो कहां कहां कराया था और इसके क्या रिजल्ट आये तथा इन कीमतों को बढ़ोत्तरी को रोकने के लिए क्या वे कोई सकारात्मक उपाय करेंगे ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Sir, the Government is closely monitoring the retail prices after the announcement of excise duty reduction and our understanding is that a certain number of manufacturers, traders and industrialists have reduced the prices. Still there is a section among the manufacturers who are yet to respond. The Government is seriously pursuing this matter. We have already informed the State Governments that they should take action under the Act and the rules. Our Ministry also requested the administrative Ministries to pursue it. On 20th April, our Ministry held a meeting with the manufactures and the industrialists

n which they were told that still a sizeable portion of the manufacturing sector is yet to respond to the excise duty concessions and they will have to respond because the expectation is that the manufacturers and the industrialists will pass on these concessions to the retailers and the consumers and that is why the Government has done all these things. They have agreed that they will monitor these things and they will report to the Government within one month. So the Government is again going to monitor it after getting a report from the manufacturers. We have also requested the NGOs to monitor these things independently. From the Government side, we are also making a thorough study. By these three studies—study by the manufacturers and the industrialists on the one side, study by the Government on the one side and study by the NGOs on the other side—we will again examine these things after one month. But we are very serious about that. We have told the manufacturers and the industrialists that they have to fall in line with others. They have to pass a substantial portion of the excise concessions to the consumers. they will have to give these concessions to the consumers. Otherwise, they cannot except this kind of help from the Government in future. That we have already told them with all seriousness.

SHRIMATI MIRA DAS : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister has repeatedly said that the Government is closely monitoring the essential commodities available in the market. At the same time, the Minister has admitted that it is under the jurisdiction of the State Government. In this way, the Government cannot avoid the shortcomings which are there; I mean, the corruption and all these things. I would like to know from the Minister if it is under the jurisdiction of the State Government and not of the Central Government, then what the agency is through which the Civil Supplies Ministry is monitoring the system.

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Sir, I have already told this thing that the implementing agency is the State Government. We have given powers under the Essential Commodities Act and all other similar Acts to the State Governments to take stringent action against those persons who are engaged in this kind of malpractices. From the Government side, we are closely monitoring the development and whenever we feel that the prices are going up or whenever we feel that there is a short supply, we advise the State Government to take remedial action. From our side also, whenever we feel that there is a real short supply, we try to augment the supply by giving more allocation.

SHRIMATI MIRA DAS : What is the agency ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : The Civil Supplies Department of the State Governments and the Union Territories is the agency.

श्री रफीक आलम : सर, मर्ज बढ़ता गया ज्यों ज्यों दवा की। पिछले बजट में जो प्राइसेज थे, उस बजट के बाद प्राइसेज बढ़ गये (**व्यवधान**)

एक माननीय सदस्य : घटे है ।

श्री रफीक आलम : मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं मंत्री महोदय से कि जब आपके होलसेल प्राइसेज कम हो रहे हैं तो रिटेल प्राइसेज क्यों ज्यादा हो रहे हैं : इस सिलसिले में क्या आप कार्यवाही करने जा रहे हैं ? कंज्यूमर क्लास वर्स्ट हिट है, जो भी हो सरोज ही या अमीर, वह वर्स्ट हिट है। इसलिए, इस सिलसिले में सरकार क्या कार्यवाही कर रही है ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Always there will not be some kind of fall in the retail prices of goods because of rise in transportation charges, overhead charges and a lot of other things which are there. While agreeing that the prices of all the commodities are not coming down to the expected levels, I would like hon. Members to kindly see the fact that for

the last one year prices are almost under control. Compared to the previous year, the prices of most of the commodities are under control. In many cases, prices are coming down also. In certain cases, prices are going up. We are closely monitoring that and we are trying to find a solution to that.

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister has furnished an impressive list of retail prices in various cities. But the real problem is in the rural areas. Some of the unscrupulous traders raise the prices without any rhyme or reason. The only way to meet this challenge is to build up consumer assistance. What steps is the Government of India taking to build up consumer assistance against these unscrupulous traders ? Is it interacting with consumer organisations to build an action plan to meet this challenge ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Regarding rural areas, only two things can be done. One is constant vigil by the State Governments. The other is where I agree with the hon. Member we must build up a strong consumer movement in this country. In our country, the consumer movement is just now developing. We passed a legislation only in 1986. The movement is at the infant stage. However, within this short period of about seven years, we have about 600 consumer organisations. The Government is now trying to build up the consumer movement all over the country with the co-operation of the State Governments. This year, we have requested the State Governments that they must try, with their own initiative, to form at least one voluntary consumer organisation in one district. I hope that we will be able to build up the movement better. For that, my appeal to hon. Members is, in this area, irrespective of politics, let us all join together to build up a strong rural-based consumer movement in this country. The Government will extend all cooperation to whoever is coming forward in this direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question No. 182.

सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के माध्यम से मोटे अनाजों की बिक्री

*182 **श्री सोम पाल†** :

श्री शारदा महतो :

क्या नागरिक आपूर्ति उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के माध्यम से मोटे अनाजों का उपलब्ध कराने का कोई प्रस्ताव सरकार के विचाराधीन है ;

(ख) यदि हां तो इस संबंध में क्या निर्णय लिया गया है, और

(ग) यदि उपरोक्त भाग (क) का उत्तर "ना" हो, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं ?

नागरिक आपूर्ति उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री और वाणिज्य मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री का अतिरिक्त प्रभार (श्री कमालुद्दीन अहमद) : (क) और (ख) केन्द्रीय सरकार आमतौर पर राज्य/संघ राज्य क्षेत्रों को सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के जरिए वितरण के लिए गेहूं, चावल, लेवी चीनी, आयातित खाद्य तेल, सॉफ्ट कोक तथा मिट्टी के तेल का आवंटन करती है। हाल के महीनों में कुछ राज्यों को सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के लिए अब तक लगभग एक लाख मी. टन मोटे अनाज का आवंटन किया जा चुका है। मोटे अनाजों की भविष्य में आपूर्ति राज्यों/संघ राज्य क्षेत्रों द्वारा की गई मांग तथा केन्द्रीय पूल में उनकी उपलब्धता पर निर्भर करेगी।

(ग) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

श्री सोमपाल : सभापति महोदय, इस वर्ष एक बहुत दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण स्थिति देखने में यह आई कि जितने भी मोटे अनाज थे, बाजरा, मक्का, ज्वार और जौ आदि सभी के दाम पिछले वर्ष के मुकाबले में से 23 प्रतिशत गिरे और उसका मुख्य कारण

†सभा में यह प्रश्न श्री सोमपाल द्वारा पूछा गया।